DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 285 363 EC 200 452

AUTHOR Obringer, S. J.; Isonhood, Judith B.
TITLE Survey of the Post-Secondary Years of Students Identified as Learning Disabled.
PUB DATE Nov 86
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Mid-South Education Research Association (15th, Memphis, TN, November, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Adjustment (to Environment); Competence; Daily Living Skills; *Emotional Adjustment; *Employment; Followup Studies; Job Satisfaction; *Learning Disabilities; *Social Adjustment; Social Status; Surveys; *Young Adults

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the social and vocational adjustment of 25 learning disabled young adults who received services in a Specific Learning Disability program during their elementary or secondary school years. Personal interviews were conducted using a 32-item questionnaire. Among findings were that 56% were living in their parents' homes; 60% had completed high school with a traditional diploma; and 12% had completed 2 to 3 years of college. Forty-eight percent reported no involvement with the law, 4% had been arrested, and 4% convicted of a felony. In terms of jobs, 32% were currently employed in clerical, 24% in semi-skilled, 4% in professional positions; the majority reported finding their job through a relative or close friend. The majority (52%) indicated they liked their job "very well" and only 4% reported not liking their job at all. Hourly wages ranged from $3.35 to over $8.00. The vast majority reported absence from work of zero to 2 days within the past year. Twenty-four percent had kept their first job, 28% indicated they had had two jobs, and 16% had had three jobs. Reasons for job changes included going back to school (16%), conflicts with the boss (12%), and layoffs (8%). The majority displayed independent living skills: driver's licenses (100%), voting registration (64%), checking accounts (48%), and credit cards (24%). Seventy-two percent said they were currently dating. The population surveyed appeared to be heterogeneous, with overall adequate adjustment despite indications that this group tended to be underemployed and somewhat dependent on family, relatives, and close friends for decision making. The study instrument and response data are appended. (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED285363

SURVEY OF THE POST-SECONDARY YEARS OF STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS LEARNING DISABLED

S. J. Obringer

Judith B. Isonhood

Mississippi State University

Paper presented at the Fifteenth Annual Conference of the Mid-South Education Research Association, Memphis, TN, November, 1986.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Stephen J Obringer
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EC 200 452

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Survey of the Post-Secondary Years of Students Identified as Learning Disabled

Since its beginning in the early 1960s, professionals in the field of learning disabilities have focused their attentions on the elementary school population. According to Koppitz (1971), the vast majority of learning disabled programs are located in the elementary school only and do not make provisions for older children with learning problems. Presently, these learning disabled (LD) students are trying to cope with their disabilities in society as they reach adulthood. Samuel Kirk (1983) addressed the problems of learning disabled adults. Kirk's special attention to the learning disabled adult is indicative of the growing emphasis on the future outlook for the LD adult.

Previously, educators and other professionals concerned with learning disabilities thought that, with therapy and remediation, the difficulties experienced by this group would disappear. According to Cruickshank, Morse, Williams and Johns (1980), "these youths do not cease to live or to struggle as they approach eighteen years of age" (p. 239). The authors emphasize that any text on adolescents with learning disabilities must concern itself with the post-school years and young adulthood.

Because of the limited amount of research with young adults with learning disabilities, references will be made to pertinent studies involving younger LD students. Koppitz (1971) conducted a five year follow-up study on 177 LD students, ages six to twelve. Results

indicated that the students who returned to regular classrooms did not "catch-up" with their normal peers, but that the students learned to compensate for these problems. Further proof that learning disabilities do not really "go away," but rather, are compensated for, can easily be observed when an LD pupil is under stress. Many LD pupils function quite well in the small special classes but regress when they are placed into large, less-structured classes, or when they are upset, ill, or under stress (Koppitz, 1971).

Public awareness through extensive media coverage on television and in magazines in the past decade have made the layman more aware of the nature and the effects of learning disabilities. As a result, young adults have recognized that their life adjustment problems may be related to a specific learning disability (Kirk & Gallagher, 1983). The plight of the young LD adult is described by Cruickshank et al. (1980).

> The fact is that many are equipped for nothing; they cannot read and cannot fill out a job application; most cannot gain entrance to or compete in college; some cannot manage their lives or even organize themselves to seek assistance. They do not understand their own differences, and they have no applicable vocational skills (p. 195).

The lack of research on the young LD adult may be the result of the relative newness of programs at the secondary level. For this reason, experience and research are lacking to support the LD programs at the secondary level (Lerner, 1981). According to Cruickshank et al. (1980), "the literature is sparse in material focusing on the secondary LD pupil. There is little in the body of reported research or even clinical studies to clarify our picture of the LD adolescent" (p. 193).

Cox (1977) echoed this view by noting that the professional literature on the LD adult is nearly nonexistent.

Patton and Polloway (1982) suggested that professionals dealing with learning disabled adolescents conduct follow-up studies of their former students to assist overall adjustment in the adult world. This recommendation appears logical in that they would have access to the information necessary for finding and interviewing these LD students, even years after being taught. In this study, the investigator has attempted to carry out this suggestion.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the present social and occupational status of young learning disabled adults who were screened eligible and received services in a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) program during their secondary or elementary and secondary school years.

Twenty-five subjects comprised the study. Twenty former LD students of the investigator were located through the use of the telephone directories for Yazoo, Hinds, and Rankin Counties in Mississippi. Five additional subjects were referred by a colleague. All students contacted were personally interviewed by the investigator. The interview time ranged from 20 to 80 minutes. The majority of the interviews were initiated by telephone conversations. The location of the interview was as convenient as possible for the interviewee. Students were interviewed at their place of employment, restaurants, malls, libraries, stores, and in their personal homes. All interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis in an environment conductive to

conversation.

Each former LD student was told that the purpose of the research project was to collect data as a part of the investigator's education. The role of the interviewee and the means whereby the interviewee's name was obtained was explained. Care was taken to assure the subject that the data would be presented in tabular form and his/her name or other identifying information would remain confidential. All students who were contacted agreed to be interviewed.

The interview format was varied to meet the interests and attitudes of the subjects. There was some variation in the order and context of the questions, but the structure of the interview remained intact. Rapport was easily established with the students, and the subjects volunteered information without monetary or other incentives. Twenty-four of the 25 subjects answered all of the 32-item questionnaire. One student was unable to answer the questions on employment because that student had never held a job.

Measurement

Data were obtained through personal interviews by the investigator using a 32-item questionnaire (See Table 1). The data were collected and reported in terms of percentages and group means. No statistical tests were performed as the study was descriptive in nature.

Results

As can be seen in Table 2, the LD adults displayed the following social and occupational competencies:

Residence--The majority of young LD adults tend to live with their parents. Fifty-six percent of the surveyed population were living in the residence of their biological parents.

Educational Level--Sixty percent of the surveyed population had completed high school with a traditional diploma. An additional 16% had received a high school certificate of completion. In contrast, 24% had dropped out of school with neither a diploma nor a certificate. Of these six dropouts, three entered a vocational program, and two obtained the GED.

Higher Education--Twenty-four percent of the sample stated that they had received no additional training or education beyond high school. An additional 24% attended between one to two years of college, while another 12% had completed between two and three years of college. Twelve percent had taken from one course to one semester of college work.

Involvement With the Law--Forty-eight percent of the sample stated that they had had no involvement with the law. An additional 44% had minor traffic violations, 4% had been arrested, and another 4% had been convicted of a felony.

Employment Status--Thirty-two percent of the population were currently employed in a clerical occupation. An additional 24% described their occupation as semi-skilled. Other occupational descriptors included unskilled (12%), service related (16%), professional (4%), military (4%), and miscellaneous (8%). The majority

of the respondents reported finding their job through a relative or close friend, 40% and 36% respectively. Twelve percent worked for their fathers.

Job Satisfaction--Fifty-two percent of the respondents reported that they liked their job "very well". An additional 20% stated that their job was "all right". Only four percent stated that they did not like their job at all.

Salary--The hourly wage ranged between $3.35 or below to a high of more than $8.00. The LD adults' salaries were distributed quite equally within this range.

Hours Worked--The majority of the LD adults stated that they worked approximately 40 hours a week (48%). An additional 24% worked between 41 and 50 hours per week. One former student worked 82 hours per week at three jobs.

Absenteeism--The vast majority of the surveyed population stated that they were absent from work between zero to two days within the last year. An additional 12% had been absent between three and five days, while 8% reported being absent nine or more days within the last year.

Job Changes--Twenty-four percent of the sample stated that they had retained their first job. An additional 28% reported having two jobs, while 16% had had three jobs. Sixteen percent also reported having between five and six jobs.

Reasons for Job Change--Sixteen percent of the sample changed jobs to go back to school. Twelve percent reported not getting along with

the boss, 12% reported finding a better job, and eight percent were laid off.

Independent Living Skills--One hundred percent of the LD adults possessed driver's licenses, 76% owned their own cars, 64% were registered to vote, 64% had savings accounts, 48% had checking accounts, and 24% used credit cards. Seventy-two percent stated that they were currently dating. Also, the majority of the sample were very involved with a variety of hobbies.

In summary, the LD young adult population surveyed appears to be a very heterogeneous population. Overall adjustment appears quite adequate with some indication that this group tends to be "underemployed" and somewhat dependent on family, relatives, and close friends for decision making and support. As a group, these young adults appear to be law abiding citizens with wide variance in productivity. A surprising number have attained additional training and/or education and are well integrated into society.

The investigator plans to survey this group at a later date to see if the social and occupational adjustment found in this study continues on a long-term basis.

References

Boutain, C. G. (1981). The effectiveness of special education curriculum on the life-work of Southgate educationally handicapped young adults. Dissertation Abstracts International, 42, 4752-A.

Cobb, R. M., & Crump, W. D. (1984). Post-school status of young adults identified as learning disabled while enrolled in public schools: A comparison of those enrolled and not enrolled in learning disabilities programs. Final report. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alabama. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 253029)

Cruickshank, W., Morse, M., Williams, C., & Johns, J. (1980). Learning disabilities--The struggle from adolescence toward adulthood. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. (1977). Education of handicapped children: Implementation of Part B of the Education of the Handicapped Act. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Hoff, E. (1982). Locus of control: Basic concepts about self and environment in young workers. Kolner Zeitschrift fur Soziologic and Sozialpsychologie, 34(2), 316-339. (Abstract).

Horn, F. W., O'Donnell, J. P., & Vitulano, L. A. (1983). Long term follow-up studies of learning disabled persons. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 16(9), 542-555.

Kirk, S. A., & Gallagher, J. J. (1983). Educating exceptional children. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Koppitz, E. M. (1971). Children with learning disabilities--A five year follow-up study. New York: Grune & Stratton.

Kroll, L. G. (1984). LD's--What happens when they are no longer children? Academic Therapy, 20(2), 133-148.

Lehtinen, L., & Dumas, L. (1976). A follow-up study of learning disabled children as adults: A final report. Evanston, IL: Cove School Research Office. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 163-728)

Lerner, J. W. (1981). Learning disabilities: Theories, diagnosis, and teaching strategies. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Levin, E. K., Zimond, N., & Birch, J. W. (1985). A follow-up study of 52 learning disabled adolescents. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 18(1), 2-7.

Patton, J. R., & Polloway, E. A. (1982). The learning disabled: The adult years. Psychological Abstracts, 69(1), 1331 (Abstract).

U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. (1977). Dictionary of Occupational Titles, 4th ed. Washington, DC: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office.

White, W. J., Alley, G. R., Deshler, D. D., Schumaker, J. B., Warner, M. M., & Clark, F. L. (1982). Are there learning disabilities after high school? Exceptional Children, 49(3), 273-74.

White, W. J. (1985). Perspectives on the education and training of learning disabled adults. Learning Disability Quarterly, 8, 231-236.

Table 1

Questionnaire

1. What is your mailing address?

   _____

2. Your age is: _____

3. Your race is: _____

4. Your sex is: Male ( ) Female ( )

5. Your marital status is:

   Single ( ) Married ( ) Separated ( ) Divorced ( ) Widowed ( )

6. How many children do you have?

   None ( ) 1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 or more ( )

7. You live:

   ( ) By yourself
   ( ) With a roommate
   ( ) With parents
   ( ) With spouse
   ( ) With relatives

8. Your residence is in:

   ( ) A house
   ( ) A mobile home
   ( ) An apartment
   ( ) A dormitory
   ( ) A boarding house
   ( ) Other _____

9. Your education can be described as which of the following:

   ( ) Did not finish high school
   ( ) Graduated from high school
   ( ) Completed GED
   ( ) Some college credit
   ( ) Vocational technical school
   ( ) Graduated from a two year college
   ( ) Graduated from a four year college

10. Your involvement with the law can best be described as:

( ) No involvement with the law
( ) Traffic violations
( ) Arrested and/or fined
( ) Arrested, fined, and convicted

11. What is your job, if employed?

_____

12. How would you describe your current job?

( ) Service
( ) Skilled
( ) Professional
( ) Unskilled
( ) Clerical
( ) Managerial
( ) Other _____

13. How did you find out about your current job?

( ) From a friend
( ) From a relative
( ) From an advertisement
( ) From a government agency
( ) Other _____

14. How well do you like your present job?

( ) Not at all
( ) Not at times
( ) Somewhat
( ) All right
( ) Very well

15. How much do you make per hour?

( ) $1.00 to $2.00
( ) $2.01 to $3.35
( ) $3.36 to $4.00
( ) $4.01 to $6.00
( ) $6.01 or more

16. How many hours per week do you average working?

( ) 0-9 hours
( ) 10-20 hours
( ) 21-30 hours
( ) 31-40 hours
( ) 41- or more hours

17. How long do you anticipate your present job lasting?

( ) 1 month
( ) 3 months
( ) 6 months
( ) 1 year
( ) More than 1 year

18. How often do you feel that your job allows you to use your abilities to the fullest?

Never ( ) Sometimes ( ) Frequently ( ) Always ( )

19. How many days were you absent from your job in the last year?

0-2 days ( ) 3-5 days ( ) 6-8 days ( ) 9 or more days ( )

20. How many jobs have you had since high school?

1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( ) 5 ( ) 6 or more ( )

21. Why did you leave these jobs?

( ) Did not like job
( ) Could not do job
( ) Was fired
( ) Did not like boss
( ) Found a better job
( ) Was offered more money

Please answer Yes or No to the following questions.

22. Do you own your own car? Yes ( ) No ( )

23. Do you have a driver's license? Yes ( ) No ( )

24. Have you ever had your driver's license suspended? Yes ( ) No ( )

25. Do you have a checking account? Yes ( ) No ( )

26. Do you have a savings account? Yes ( ) No ( )

27. Do you have a credit card? Yes ( ) No ( )

28. Did you co-sign with someone to get a credit card? Yes ( ) No ( )

29. Are you registered to vote? Yes ( ) No ( )

30. Have you been in the military? Yes ( ) No ( )

31. Do you date? Yes ( ) No ( )

32. What are your hobbies? _____

Table 2

Social and Occupational Adjustment of Young Learning Disabled Adults

I. Residence		
A. Question - Students live:		
1. with parents	14/25	(56%)
2. with a roommate	7/25	(28%)
3. with relatives	2/25	(8%)
4. with spouse	2/25	(8%)
B. Question - Students live in:		
1. a house	18/25	(72%)
2. a dormitory	4/25	(16%)
3. an apartment, mobile home, or condo.	3/25	(12%)
II. Educational level		
A. Question - Students graduated from high school:		
1. with a diploma	15/25	(60%)
2. with a certificate	4/25	(16%)
B. Question - Students dropped out of school	6/25	(24%)
C. Question - Students' level of education after high school		
1. no training	6/25	(24%)
2. 35 minute course to 14 weeks	6/25	(24%)
3. nine months	1/25	(4%)
4. 1 course or 1 full semester of college	3/25	(12%)
5. 1 to 1½ years of college	6/25	(24%)
6. 2 to 3 years of college	3/25	(12%)
III. Involvement with the law		
A. Question - Students' involvement with the law		
1. no involvement with the law	12/25	(48%)
2. traffic violations	11/25	(44%)
driver's license suspended	3	
3. arrested and/or fined	1/25	(4%)
4. arrested, fined, and convicted	1/25	(4%)
IV. Employment (One student did not respond to the employment questions because he had never held a job.)		
A. Question - How would you describe your previous or present job?		
1. Service	4/25	(16%)
2. Unskilled	3/25	(12%)
3. Semi-skilled	6/25	(24%)
4. Clerical	8/25	(32%)
5. Professional	1/25	(4%)
6. Military	1/25	(4%)
7. Miscellaneous	2/25	(8%)

B. Question - How did you find out about your present job?

1. From a relative	10/24	(40%)
2. From a friend	9/24	(36%)
3. From an advertisement	3/24	(12%)
4. From school	2/24	(8%)

C. Question - How well do you like your job?

1. Not at all	1/24	(4%)
2. Not at times	2/24	(8%)
3. Somewhat	3/24	(12%)
4. All right	5/24	(20%)
5. Very well	13/24	(52%)

D. How much do you make per hour?

1. $3.35 or below	5/24	(20%)
2. $3.36 to $4.00	5/24	(20%)
3. $4.01 to $6.00	4/24	(16%)
4. $6.01 to $8.00	5/24	(20%)
5. $8.01 or more	5/24	(20%)

E. How many hours per week do you average working?

1. 21-30 hours	2/24	(8%)
2. 31-40 hours	12/24	(48%)
3. 41-50 hours	6/24	(24%)
4. 51 or more hours	4/24	(16%)

F. How many days were you absent from your job in the last year?

1. 0-2 days	18/24	(72%)
2. 3-5 days	3/24	(12%)
3. 6-8 days	1/24	(4%)
4. 9 or more days	2/24	(8%)

G. How many jobs have you had since high school?

1. One	6/24	(24%)
2. Two	7/24	(28%)
3. Three	4/24	(16%)
4. Four	3/24	(12%)
5. Five or six	4/24	(16%)

H. Why did you leave these jobs?

1. To go back to school	4/24	(16%)
2. Didn't like boss or co-worker	3/24	(12%)
3. Held same job.	3/24	(12%)
4. Found a better job	3/24	(12%)
5. Laid off	2/24	(8%)
6. Didn't like job	2/24	(8%)
7. Other reasons	7/24	(28%)

V. Independent Living Skills

A. Questions:

1. Do you own your own car?	19/25	(76%)
2. Do you have a driver's license? . . .	25/25	(100%)
3. Do you have a checking account? . . .	12/25	(48%)
4. Do you have a savings account?	16/25	(64%)
5. Do you have a credit card?	6/25	(24%)
6. Are you registered to vote?	16/25	(64%)
7. Do you date?	18/25	(72%)
8. What are your hobbies?	varied	